

Monthly Vital Statistics

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Focus. . . Non-Marital Fertility in Missouri

According to the 1990 US Census, the 1989 median household income, including public assistance, for single Missouri women with children under six years old was \$7,038. In the same year, the median income for single Missouri women without children was \$11,541, and for married couples with kids under six it was \$32,951. Not all families headed by single women include children who were born out-of-wedlock, but many people have identified a reduction in the number of births to unwed mothers as an important means to reduce poverty and the costs of welfare programs. In 1994, more than one half of Missouri infants born out-of-wedlock received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits at some time in their first year. Income support and health benefits through AFDC comprised about 4 percent of Missouri's total 1996 operating budget. Reducing out-of-wedlock births could reduce these costs (plus some costs of the federal Food Stamps program), and ease the burden of poverty in the state. Unfortunately, birth data show a trend toward more out-of-wedlock births rather than fewer.

In the course of the past several decades, there has been a consistent increase in the percent of Missouri births to unmarried mothers. In retrospect, the trend becomes apparent with the early stages of the baby boom, as shown in Figure 1. In 1950 the percentage of Missouri's new mothers who were unmarried was 3.6, a figure which increased to 32.1 in 1995. This change accompanied an increase in the percentage of all women of childbearing age who were not married. In the 1950 US Census, 64 percent of Missouri women aged 10 to 49 were currently married. In 1990, only 51 percent were married. This change is related to two trends: an increase in the age of women at their first marriage and an increase in the number of divorces.

Although the decision to marry and the decision to have a child are not always made independently of each other, examining trends in the non-marital fertility rate - the number of out-of-wedlock births per 1,000 unmarried women of childbearing age - is useful because it measures the average risk that an unmarried woman will have an out-of-wedlock birth. This is important in targeting programs intended to prevent non-marital childbearing. Using this statistic, the trend toward increased out-of-wedlock childbearing is evident beginning in the 1940s. Furthermore, since 1940, the increase in non-marital fertility has been essentially uniform. The increasing numbers of unmarried women of childbearing age and the climbing non-marital fertility rate have combined to cause the alarming growth of unwed births. Between 1960 and 1995, the number of out-of-wedlock births to Missouri residents increased by 17,767 (more than 3-fold.) Of that increase, 40.3 percent is explained by the increase in non-marital fertility, 22.3 percent is due solely to the higher number of unmarried women, with the remainder explained by the interaction of the two factors.

Disaggregating recent non-marital fertility by age and race shows some details about women who are at particular risk to have out-of-wedlock births (Table 1). First, unmarried women aged 18 to 24 are more likely to give birth than unmarried women in any other age category, and fertility of unmarried 18- and 19-year-olds is very similar to that of unwed 20- to 24-year-olds. By contrast, overall fertility (the fertility rate without consideration of marital status) among 18- and 19-year-olds is lower than that of 20- to 24-year-olds and 25- to 29-year-olds. Second, unwed fertility increased in all age groups except 40- to 49-year-olds between 1980 and 1990. From 1990 to 1995, 18 to 19 was the only age range that showed a substantial increase in non-marital fertility. The fertility of unwed 15- to 17-year olds declined between 1990 and 1995, and all other age groups showed little or no change. Third, in each year for which reliable population estimates by race are available, non-marital fertility for African-American women was higher than that for white women in all age categories. Fourth, 1994 saw a decline in non-marital fertility in all of the prime child-bearing age categories (15 - 39) of African-Americans.

Because of the large variations in non-marital fertility rates among different age groups, adjusting fertility rates for the age of the population at risk presents a clearer picture than crude rates when comparing groups, areas or time periods. Table 1 includes non-marital total fertility rates (TFR), which adjust for age by applying age-specific rates to a hypothetical cohort of women, giving the lifetime number of births expected per 1,000 women. The TFR's show that the small decline in the crude rate of non-marital fertility between 1990 and 1995 (from 43.4 to 41.1) was a product of a change in the age distribution of unmarried females rather than a decline in non-marital fertility, since the TFR actually increased slightly (from 1060.0 to 1063.6). The TFR's also indicate that, although non-marital fertility among African-American women is higher than among white women, the rate for white women is rising faster - the ratio of the races' TFR's dropped from almost 6:1 in 1980 to 3:1 in 1994.

In summary, high non-marital fertility is not a new development, but the result of a trend that has existed through the last half century. The age distribution of non-marital fertility indicates that prevention efforts might be best targetted at the 18 to 24 age range, but unwed fertility is increasing at nearly all ages. Non-marital fertility is much higher among African-American women than among whites, but the gap has narrowed, largely as a result of declines since 1990 in the rates for African-American women.

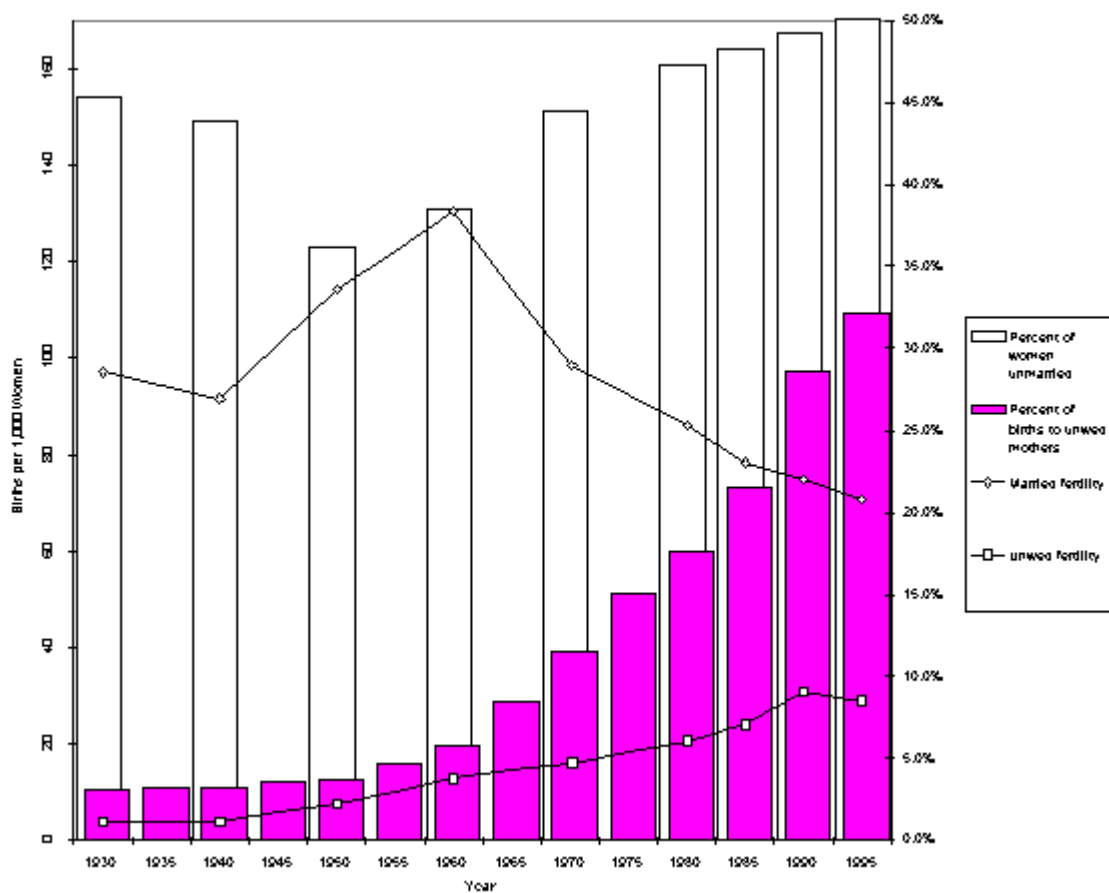
Since a large majority of out-of-wedlock births are unplanned (77 percent, according to the 1990 Missouri Maternal and Infant Health Survey), family planning services are a tool which has promise as a stable and equitable solution to the problem of non-marital fertility and its effect on welfare costs.

Table 1
Fertility of Unmarried Women, by Age and Race: Missouri Resident Data 1980-1995

1980			1990		1994			1995	
All Races									
Age	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility	
10 - 14	199	1.1	205	1.2	222		1.1	209	1.1
15 - 17	2,773	21.6	3,227	32.8	3,356		31.2	3,238	28.9
18 - 19	3,068	40.5	4,598	66.0	4,657		72.2	4,569	69.0
20 - 24	4,891	42.0	7,900	67.8	8,691		70.9	8,431	68.7
25 - 29	1,959	34.6	4,062	52.2	3,790		52.7	3,793	51.8
30 - 34	710	18.4	1,844	29.6	2,138		31.1	2,073	29.9
35 - 39	206	7.7	650	12.9	834		13.4	894	13.7
40 - 44	53	2.4	100	2.2	149		2.7	148	2.5
45 - 49	4	0.2	3	0.1	5		0.1	5	0.1
General	13,863	29.9	22,589	43.4	23,842		43.1	23,360	41.1
Total Fertility Rate		677.7		1060.0			1097.8		1063.6
White									
Age	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility			
10 - 14	71	0.4	77	0.5	74	0.5			
15 - 17	1,348	12.3	1,681	20.4	1,931	21.2			
18 - 19	1,543	23.9	2,700	46.4	3,036	56.1			
20 - 24	2,144	22.6	4,176	44.2	5,280	53.2			
25 - 29	873	19.7	2,115	35.4	2,139	39.1			
30 - 34	280	9.4	940	20.0	1,172	22.5			
35 - 39	94	4.5	335	8.6	501	10.4			
40 - 44	21	1.2	53	1.5	81	1.9			
45 - 49	3	0.2	2	0.1	3	0.1			
General	6,377	16.7	12,079	29.0	14,217	32.1			
Total Fertility Rate		375.3		705.3	814.0				
African-American									
Age	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility	Out-of-Wedlock Births	Non-Marital Fertility			
10 - 14	128	5.0	125	5.2	146	5.6			
15 - 17	1,419	82.0	1,522	109.9	1,380	93.4			
18 - 19	1,524	147.7	1,847	184.9	1,564	167.1			

20 - 24	2,732	135.0	3,649	188.0	3,246	155.9
25 - 29	1,082	93.6	1,917	114.7	1,585	97.1
30 - 34	426	51.9	882	61.0	931	59.9
35 - 39	109	19.3	301	27.2	320	23.2
40 - 44	32	7.0	45	5.0	63	5.4
45 - 49	1	0.2	1	0.2	2	0.2
General	7,453	95.7	10,289	109.0	9,237	
Total Fertility Rate		2101.2		2706.1	90.3	2351.6
Non-marital fertility = age-specific out-of-wedlock births per 1,000 age-specific unmarried females.						
General non-marital fertility = total out-of-wedlock births per 1,000 unmarried females 15-44.						
Race-specific data are not presented for 1995 because reliable population estimates by race are not available.						

Figure 1: Trends in Fertility of Missouri Women Ages 10 - 49
by Marital Status: 1930-1990



Provisional Vital Statistics for February 1997

Live births increased slightly in February as 5,867 Missouri infants were born compared with 5,843 one year earlier.

Cumulative births show a decrease for the 12 months ending with February from 73,508 in 1996 to 72,746 in 1997.

Deaths increased in February as 4,73 Missourians died compared with 4,518 one year earlier. For the 12 months ending with February, there was a slight decrease in mortality.

The **Natural increase** in Missouri in February was 1,124 (5,867 births minus 4,743 deaths) compared with 1,325 one year earlier.

Marriages and **dissolutions of marriage** both increased slightly in February, but decreased for the 12 months ending with February. The marriage to divorce ratio for this latter period was 1.74.

Infant deaths increased for all three time periods shown below. For the 12 months ending with February, the infant death rate was 8.1 per 1,000 live births compared with a rate of 7.2 in 1996.

PROVISIONAL RESIDENT VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE STATE OF MISSOURI

February					Jan.-Feb. cumulative				12 months ending with February				
Item	Number		Rate*		Number		Rate*		Number			Rate*	
	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
Live Births	5,843	5,867	13.8	14.2	12,806	13,009	14.6	15.2	73,508	72,746	14.1	13.8	13.6
Deaths	4,518	4,743	10.6	11.5	10,247	10,467	11.7	12.2	54,377	54,313	9.9	10.2	10.1
Natural increase	1,325	1,124	3.1	2.7	2,559	2,542	2.9	3.0	19,131	18,433	4.1	3.6	3.4
Marriages	2,677	2,879	6.3	7.0	5,512	5,536	6.3	6.5	46,099	44,930	8.5	8.7	8.4
Dissolutions	2,076	2,080	4.9	5.0	4,705	3,854	5.4	4.5	26,689	25,857	4.9	5.0	4.8
Infant deaths	48	61	7.7	10.5	87	112	6.5	8.7	532	591	8.2	7.2	8.1
Population base (in thousands)	...	...	5,359	5,395	...	...	5,359	5,395	...	...	5,282	5,326	5,365

*Rates for live births, deaths, natural increase, marriages and dissolutions are computed on the number per 1000 estimated population. The infant death rate is based on the number of infant deaths per 1000 live births. Rates are adjusted to account for varying lengths of monthly reporting periods.

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